

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND PRINT MEDIA

A Study of India Today

Ms. Neha Jingala, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, Delhi University

Dr.Sarojini Nandal, Retired Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana

Abstract

In India, mass media plays an important role in the political empowerment of women. It informs, educates, makes women aware about the different resources required for their overall development. The research paper tries to examine the coverage given by the news magazine- India Today, related to the various issues related to the political empowerment of women in India. The research specifically analyses the various aspects related to political women empowerment stories in the news magazine. It examines the different political indicators of women empowerment, which political indicator is highlighted the most with how many number of stories, source of these stories, use of photographs etc.

Keywords: Political Empowerment, Women Empowerment, Print Media, News Magazine

Introduction

Empowerment of women in different spheres of life- social, economic, political, health, etc.is mandatory for the sustainable development of a country. Equal participation of both women and men in all the aspects of life actually makes the democracy stronger. (UNFPA, 1995)

The main five elements of women empowerment are – self- worth, ability to determine their choices, proper access to various opportunities and resources, power to control their own lives and ability to influence social change to ensure social and economic order. (UNPOPIN)

Various development paradigms have strongly advocated empowering of women for human development in any society. Women empowerment forms a major part of the national development process.

Media is one considered to be the fourth estate of the democracy. It helps in the development of a country and its nation building. Mass media plays a significant role in the enlightening people about politics, shaping their political views and political lives. It has the power to reach far flung, diversified audience, removing all the geographical barriers.

Powerful and popular means of mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, cinema, telecommunications, digital media signifies the power of social control and economic resource. The modern world is considered as the information era, where media plays an important role. Mass media helps in mobilizing people and shaping their opinion.

Media and different aspects of political development has been studied extensively by different social scientists. Political communicators and social scientists like L.LyodPye, Torsten Albigh and Paul Lazarsfeld have studied the importance of communication in various fields of political development.

Political Empowerment is referred to the acquisition, bestowing or sharing the power with women. It requires participation of women in getting their rights and due share in power positions at different levels -local, regional, state, national. It is related to the capacity to mobilise, analyse, participate, organise in actions for change in the empowerment of women to claim their entitlements and rights. (Shailshree, 2013)

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has equal right to participate in the Government of her/ his country.

India introduced Quota based political reservations in 1993 for rural women to promote gender equality. It made the governance at local level inclusive and responsive to the different needs of women. One-third reservation for women at state and national level is being debated strongly. The women's reservation bill which would reserve a one third seats in the national and state legislatures for women has been passed by the upper house of the Indian parliament. Women have got 1/3rd reservation at the local level as per the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution of India passed in 1993. Many states have increased their quota to 50% in Panchayati Raj institutions and a few have them have extended this to their urban local bodies as well.

However, issues related to Political empowerment of women is not limited to the one -third elected representation in the local governance like panchayats and municipal authorities. It includes women's financial freedom, literacy, awareness level, access to the political process, etc. Working for the women's rights and addressing different barriers to in their political participation are crucial for achieving women empowerment. (Chakraborty, 2017)

Political representation of women always been an issue of debate. Women representation in different legislatures have been a point of concern worldwide. The under representation of women effects their role in policy making and influences their capacity to negotiate and access resources. The representation of women in country's political set up is test of its claim for democracy (Lovenduski, 2005).

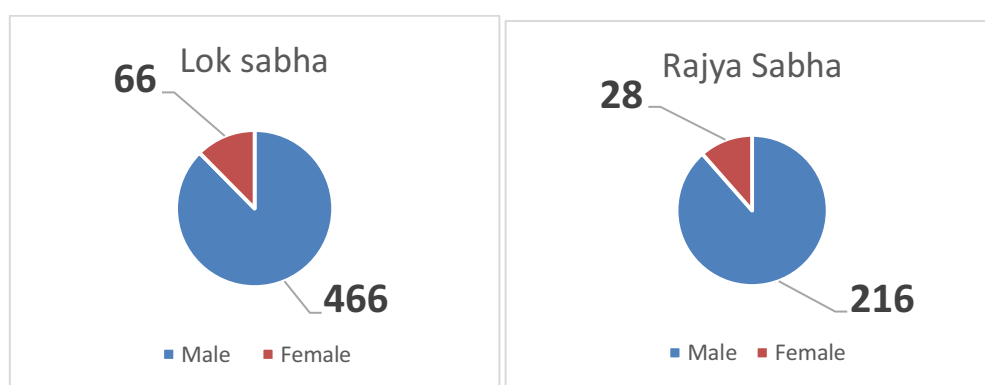


Fig. 1 - Representation of Women in Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha

There are 66 female members in the 16th Lok Sabha out of total 532 members and in Rajya Sabha 28 members are female out of total 244 members.

Media is a powerful means of information in the society. The news and information they disseminate can reinforce or change social behaviour, mobilise people to take appropriate actions. The role of mass media in the political empowerment of women is very important for India. It can assist women in the use of different available resources for their own development by adequate exposure, knowledge and information. Appropriate coverage of women related issues by mass media can boost their confidence, strength and self-worth.

Media should strive for unbiasedness and accuracy. However, there are imbalances in women related coverage. For example, women politicians may be under represented in news. There is a strong preoccupation with women as celebrities or victims only. (UN Women)

In this light mass media plays an important role in the overall empowerment of women and specifically politically also.

Review of Literature

Narayana, A.& Ahamad, T.(2016) considers media as an important tool for accelerating women related issues. He argues that positive news items related to women are generally ignored by the media as it is largely dominated by males which is reflected in its reporting. He further adds that stereotypical images of women in media needs to be changed with strong stories related to women. Such coverage would leave a great impact on people's attitude, public policy etc.

Okiring, Patience I. (2013) in his study states that there is a negative and under representation of women entrepreneurs by the print media. He stated that entrepreneurial women in the Kansas City Star are not portrayed properly in comparison to men.

Malhotra, A., et. al (2009) mentions in their research paper that the use of technology such as internet, mass media, cell phones etc. would generate positive and useful discourse of women empowerment as the reach of mass media is wide and they have a powerful role in shaping the views of the people across boundaries.

Objectives

1. To examine the coverage of issues related to Political Empowerment of Women in India Today, in terms of –
 - a) Total number of issues focussing on political women empowerment.
 - b) Number of photographs in women empowerment stories.
 - c) Different sources of political women empowerment stories.
 - d) To find out the most highlighted issue.
2. To analyse the coverage of issues related to Political Empowerment of Women.

Methodology

Content analysis was used to examine the above stated objectives in terms of the extent of coverage given to the Political Empowerment of Women the Print Media.

For the purpose of this research, I have analysed the coverage of political women empowerment issues in India Today (a fortnightly Indian English-language news magazine) for one month -August. In total 5 issues of India Today were analysed for the current study.

Universe- The study included all the feature stories/ articles/ opinions/ special sections, etc that appeared in August's 5 issues of India Today.

Sampling- Non- probability sampling was adopted to choose the sample. The method of purposive sampling was found suitable as the study was conducted for one month, analysing 5 different issues of India Today that appeared in the month of August, 2018.

Theme- The study focusses on various issues focussing on the Political Empowerment of Indian Women only. The present study has the following political indicators for the same are Women's Rights, Laws related to Women, Justice to Women, Policies related to Women, Political Representation of Women, Equality, Participation/ Role of Women in Governance, Women Reservation Bill.

Data Collection and Analysis

1) July 31-August 06, 2018

S.No.	Section	Source	Indicator	Photograph
1	Glasshouse	Not mentioned	Women Politician	Yes
2	The Big Story- Rafale	Sandeep Unnithan	Women Politician	Yes

Table 1

In the July 31-August 06, 2018 issue of India Today, total 38 write ups (Feature stories, Opinion Pieces, Pull Quotes, Brief Stories etc.) were published. Out of those 38 articles, only 2 were related to the Political Empowerment of women. The first one was related to Mamata Banerjee's announcement of a rally in January 2019. As the story was part of the glasshouse section, it was a brief story which did acknowledge the source. A photograph of the Chief Minister of West Bengal was given with the story.

The second story was a 4 page big story related to the Rafale Deal, wherein the statements of the Defence Minister- Nirmala Sitharaman were included. The feature story was written by Sandeep Unnithan and a photograph of the Defence Minister was included.

Only 5.26 % coverage was done related to the theme in the current issue.

2) August 7-13, 2018

S.No.	Section	Source	Indicator	Photograph
1	Upfront	KaushikDeka and Rahul Noronha	Women Politician	Yes
2	Pull Quote	Not Mentioned	Women Politician	Yes
3	Glasshouse	Not Mentioned	Women Politician	Yes
4	Point of View	PrabhaKotiswaran	Law	Yes
5	States	RomitaDatta	Women Politician	Yes
6	The Big Story	SandeepUnnithan	Political	Yes

Table 2

In the August 7-13, 2018 issue of India Today, total 39 write ups were published. Out of those 39 articles, only 2 were related to the Political Empowerment of women. Just like the earlier issue, the current issue also addressed 15.38% of the coverage related to the theme.

The first story was related to the New Citizens' Charter, wherein the strong opinions of Mamata Banerjee on New Citizens' Charter were included. Photograph was Mamata Banerjee was given along the Feature story. The Source were Kaushik Deka and Rahul Noronha.

A Pull Quote of Vasundhara Raje- Chief Minister of Rajasthan was given on the increasing population leading to unemployment was given, which was further related to the lynching in Alwar. A photograph was included with the quote. As it was a Pull quote no source was mentioned.

Another brief story was given on Sonia Gandhi's neutral reaction on a critique made by Odisha's Pradesh Congress Party member on Rahul Gandhi's wink in the parliament. The story was given with a photograph of Former Congress President. No Source was mentioned.

An opinion piece by Prabha Kotiswaran on the right to rehabilitation enshrined in the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018, passed by the Lok Sabha was given. A thumbnail photo of the author was given with the article.

The next story written by Romita Datta was related to the sparing out of Chief Minister from the scrutiny of public watchdog enacted by the state legislature of West Bengal. A Photograph was included with the story.

In a 4 page big story related to the geopolitical missile was given in this issue, wherein the statements of the Defence Minister- Nirmala Sitharaman were included on the deal with US over Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) waiver. The feature story was written by Sandeep Unnithanand and a photograph of the Defence Minister was included.

3) August 14-20, 2018

S.No.	Section	Source	Indicator	Photograph
1	States	Romita Datta	Women Politician	Yes
2	Nation	Amitabh Srivastava	Women Politician	Yes
3	An Impact Feature	Not Mentioned	Policy	Yes

Table 3

3 write ups out of total 71 total write ups (4.12%) addressed the various political indicators of empowerment . A story written by Romita Datta addressed the views expressed by Mamata Banerjee(Chief Minister West Bengal) on the National Register of Citizens, Assam in a conference 'Love Your Neighbour'organised in Delhi. The story was given with a photograph.

Feature story was written by Amitabh Srivastava on the Bihar shelter home rape case. Involvement of Manju Verma-Social Welfare Minister of Bihar in the Balika Grih issue was discussed in the story. A photograph of the Social Welfare Minister, Bihar was given with the story.

An Impact feature on Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana was given in this issue. The scheme is specially launched by the Prime Minister of India for the underprivileged women. It will provide these women with clean cooking fuel thereby reducing their health problems. A photograph was given along this special feature.

4) August 21-27,2018

S.No.	Section	Source	Indicator	Photograph
1	Upfront Glasshouse –	Not Mentioned	Women Politician	Yes
2	Upfront Glasshouse –	Not Mentioned	Women Politician	Yes
3	Not Mentioned	Ajit Kumar Jha	Women Politician	Yes

Table 4

Out of total 44 write ups ,2 brief stories (4.54%) were given related to Maneka Gandhi and Smriti Irani respectively. The first one mentioned about the visit of Child and Women Development Minister to a spiritual teacher in Maharashtra. The second brief story was related to the book launch of Former R & AW Chief Vikram Sood by the Union Textiles Minister. Both the stories were given with photographs.

Ajit Kumar Jha's special story on the Best Performing Chief Ministers of India acknowledged Mamata Banerjee as the best performing CM of India(based on Popularity).

5) August 28- September 3, 2018

S.No.	Section	Source	Indicator	Photograph
NIL				

Table 5

Out of 32 write ups, no story related to the Political Empowerment of Women was addressed in this issue of India Today out of 34 write ups.

Analysis

The 2 big stories which featured statements of famous women politicians like Mamata Banerjee and Nirmala Sitharaman were focussed on National Resident Charter and Rafale Deal & CAATSA waiver respectively. There was a mention of ManjuVerma in a story related to the Bihar's Shelter Home case. Another story which featured Mamata Banerjee was on her exemption from the scrutiny of public watchdog. Mamata Banerjee, Sonia Gandhi, Smriti Irani, Maneka Gandhi, Vasundhara Raje (all women politicians) managed to get little space in the news magazine.

One positive story acknowledges West Bengal's CM as the best performing CM of India according to survey. Another such feature was on Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. A critical analysis was done on the rehabilitation services provided under the recent Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018

Surprisingly, no story related to the theme was published in the final issue of the India Today.

Out of the total stories on the theme only 3 were reported by females, rest were reported by males or the source not was not mentioned. Also, all the stories had photos.

Conclusion

From the above stated results, it can be concluded that the coverage of political indicators of women empowerment in the different issues of India Today was not adequate. The number or stories related to political empowerment of women in comparison to the total number of stories are very less. Different aspects of political women empowerment like women enjoying the same access as men in the governance of the country, women's active participation in the nation's politics, policies related to women, laws related to Women, justice to women, political representation of Women, etc. are either sidelined or under - represented in the news magazine. There is a need to change the way how different indicators of political women empowerment is addressed in the print media. More and appropriate coverage should be done by the print media. Dissemination of strong and positive stories by the media can definitely help in accelerating the process of political empowerment of women in India.

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